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Madame Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

My name is Mary Fran Libassi. I am a resident of 20 Loeffler Road in Bloomfield, Ct. I am testifying in support of House Bill 6645, An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill.

I am honored and excited to have this opportunity to testify on behalf of a bill I have believed in since I was in my 20 – a long time ago. I am now 81. I have believed strongly for many years that every individual has a right to self determination concerning their health care and their death. This bill is just what I have been looking for many years.

First, I want to say that we have made many advances toward a more humane dying since I was 20. It has been because legislators such as you have had the courage to pass the humane legislation many seniors strongly support.

Through our Living Wills and our Advanced Directives, you have given us some control over our dying. Joining with our Doctors, we can work together to plan what actions we want to take as we are dying. We can name a Health Care Advocate to speak for us during the dying process if we are not able. Our Self Determination is honored, respected and supported as we plan our deaths.

There is one more step that is yet to be taken. When we know we are terminally ill, there is a great fear. For many, it is not fear of death. It is fear of what happens to us as we die. There is a fear that we will stop being who we really are. We fear that we will live on and not be able to relate to our family and friends. We will not be able to carry on a good conversation, to read a good book, to play bridge – all the things that give joy to our living. People who are terminally ill have said to me, “why does it take so long to die?” “I have lived a good life. I am ready to die.”

Yes, they are afraid of pain as they go through the dying process, but some are equally afraid of what the pain medication will do for them – make it impossible for them to carry on a good conversation – all the things that give joy to our living.

This new bill provides what I believe is the most important option. It provides that after discussion with family and friends and with a doctor’s concurrence, individuals can receive a prescription that allows them to REALLY decide the time of their death. This new option “Compassionate Aid in Dying” allows individuals the greatest possibility: to be fully alive and who they really are for the longest possible time without fear and panic.

Please give the older generation the opportunity to live at their full capacity as long as they are able. This would be a very great gift to all of us.

Thank you for this opportunity to tell my story. Please seriously consider this Bill.